

Remarks at a meeting of the  
OECD DAC Peer Review Committee

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The International Development Research Centre is part of Canada's development effort. For over 37 years, IDRC has supported innovation critical for development by working directly with developing country researchers. A study conducted by the UK's Overseas Development Institute found "IDRC was the only [research] donor universally highly regarded... among both northern and southern key informants". The study further estimates that the combined efforts of IDRC and CIDA make Canada the world's third most important research donor, public or private.

Also for Canada, IDRC represents a great example of the implementation of the aid effectiveness principle and of building policy coherence. Let me first talk about aid effectiveness. IDRC practices effective aid by listening to local voices, building capacity and working with others, other donors and other national institutions.

People from the developing regions of the world are critical to this success. They are involved in every aspect of IDRC, from significant representation on the Board of Governors to the ultimate beneficiaries of the Centre's work. Indeed, IDRC is the first Crown corporation to place non-Canadians on its board to decide on the use of Canadian public funds. Research is proposed, designed, and carried out by researchers and organizations in the South. IDRC is also committed to helping to improve the administrative capacity of these research organizations; indeed it is essential to managing risk.

IDRC learns from evaluation and builds capacity in developing countries to do so. It fosters an approach that emphasizes the use of evaluation findings, both for learning and accountability for the spending of public funds.

Support for research is important for political development. The local researchers we support create evidence which often improves policy-making and can result in improved services for people. The whole process of carrying out research can help build capacity for democratic debate and better governance. Researchers push the boundaries of free expression, for that is what free inquiry requires. As well, it is important to underline that these researchers, dedicated to improving the lives of people in their countries, often end up as members of cabinets, heads of central banks, or indeed as leaders of the OECD.

On policy coherence, IDRC pools its resources with foundations, the private sector and governments in Canada and governments abroad. These partnerships increase the resources

available to Southern researchers, and help create shared vision, objectives, and principles among research donors. IDRC is also working with Canada's domestic research councils to expand opportunities for southern researchers to collaborate with Canadians. These partnerships also expand the research funds available to developing country researchers, creating many more opportunities for them.

As a funder of research, IDRC – a Canadian Crown agency– governed by an international Board, participates actively with CIDA, DFAIT and Finance Canada in delivering and sharing development results. CIDA and IDRC work together closely. We hold regular discussions on strategy and investing in joint programming in areas of common interest.

Finally, let me share with you some observations on the draft peer review report. The review identifies Canada's position among DAC members in terms of aid volume and share of national income. The peer review findings recognize Canada's leadership in humanitarian assistance and fragile states. However, as I have already mentioned, it underemphasizes its leadership in development research.

Canada is committed to peer review as an opportunity to learn from others, as well as a means to share best practice. In fact, IDRC has recently published a book which emphasizes how OECD's approach to peer learning mirrors the approach which we think most fruitful for researchers in developing countries seeking to improve public policies in their own political environments. However, as the OECD enhances its engagement with emerging economies, it needs to be open to learning from alternative approaches towards achieving common goals.

IDRC's experience is that research and innovation thrive when there is a diversity of ideas. Rather than imposing a single solution, effective development requires building capacity to create opportunities. In a sense, all countries of the world are "emerging". From climate change to the risk of epidemics – we are all learning how to adapt our societies for the challenges that face us.

Today's conversation is a step on that path. Thank you.